



# The Biofeedback Certification International Alliance

## Guidelines & Policies For Mentoring Candidates for Board Certification in HRV Biofeedback

BCIA believes that mentoring is essential to ensuring quality in the delivery of biofeedback services and that it is critical to the training of beginning biofeedback providers. This document is intended to provide a framework for mentoring of candidates for Board Certification. Both the mentor and candidate should operate within applicable local, state, and federal laws that govern their practice; the BCIA Professional Conduct and Ethical Principles of Biofeedback (PSEP); and the ethical principles of their profession/occupation. Mentoring does not substitute for supervision required for professional licensure or insurance reimbursement.

Mentoring involves a relationship between a mentor and candidate that promotes the development of skill, knowledge, responsibility, and ethical standards in the practice of biofeedback. Through mentoring, the candidate learns to apply these skills to specific practice situations.

### I. Definitions

- A. *Mentoring* is the process of transmitting knowledge and skills from the trained to the untrained or the experienced to the less experienced practitioner.
- B. *Candidate* is one who has submitted an application with documentation of the educational prerequisite and a filing fee, and has been approved.
- C. *Supervision* is the legal oversight and responsibility for the work of an unlicensed person. This is regulated by the state board of the licensed professional. In some cases a mentor and supervisor may be one in the same. Because supervision is regulated by state licensing boards, it is imperative that a licensed provider understand their own practice standard guidelines and abide by the laws that govern their license and their scope of practice.

### II. Qualifications and Limitations of Mentors

The following criteria are required for an individual to serve as a mentor:

- A. **BCIA Certification**  
The mentor must be Board Certified in HRV Biofeedback (BCB-HRV). Occasionally, because of geographic location or other special circumstances, a candidate cannot be mentored by a professional who is Board certified. If there is a professional available who by exceptional merit and experience would be able to provide appropriate mentoring, a special review of his/her credentials is requested prior to starting training. This is referred to as a Non-Certified mentor.

B. Experience

The mentor must have at least two years experience in the practice of HRV biofeedback and with a similar client base as the candidate. HRV biofeedback must be a significant portion of the person's professional work.

C Limitations

A mentor should operate within applicable local, state, and federal laws as well as in accordance with the regulations of their profession or occupation. Mentors should operate within the limits of their expertise, training, and professional license/credential.

Mentorship does not substitute for supervision required for professional licensure and it does not assume responsibility for the work of an unlicensed person. These are unique and separate contractual agreements between two professionals.

### III. HRV Biofeedback Mentoring Requirements

Mentoring involves two essential components: contact hours with the mentor and hands-on practical experience, and should be provided by a Board certified clinician (BCB-HRV), who has been approved to serve in this capacity.

A. Mentoring Contact Hours

The mentor and candidate must have a minimum of 10 contact hours together. At least two of the contact hours must involve direct observation. All mentoring contact hours may be completed face-to-face or through the use of live phone and/or web meetings, including the two hours of direct observation, so long as the mentor can view the candidate's screen during a live session. All sessions are a minimum of 20 minutes. Below is a summary of the practical training requirements.

B. Hands-On Practical Experience

The 10 contact hours with a BCIA approved mentor are to review:

- 10 sessions of personal HRV biofeedback training, demonstrating self-regulation,
- 20 sessions of patient/client treatment, using HRV biofeedback, including BVP or ECG training and respirometer (respiratory biofeedback) training.
- Discussion of five case studies.

1. *10 Sessions of Personal HRV Biofeedback Training* - The candidate is hooked up and using HRV biofeedback for self-regulation training. The mentor should review the candidate's self-regulatory skills demonstrated with no less than 10 sessions of personal training involving HRV biofeedback. The candidate may elect to be trained by the mentor as a real client or can review their completed HRV biofeedback sessions with the mentor.
2. *20 Patient/Client Sessions* - The candidate is attaching the electrodes and running the full sessions, not merely observing a minimum of 20 separate HRV biofeedback sessions, including BVP or ECG, and respirometer training. The mentor should review the candidate's work with a variety of conditions. Each session must be at least 20 minutes in length. The twenty sessions should include at least four clients who should be seen for at least four sessions each (16 sessions all together). The remaining four sessions may be used for any of the aforementioned clients or any other single or multi-session clients. Overall, the 20 sessions should extend over a minimum of 10 weeks. The mentor should make sure the candidate has good skills in HRV biofeedback as well as proper and proficient use of equipment and hook-up techniques.
3. *5 Case Studies*: The case study presentations should reflect a client's treatment process from intake through protocol selection/adjustment, and discharge. These should be actual cases presented either by the mentor to broaden the candidate's exposure to a wide variety of HRV biofeedback scenarios or can be presented by the candidate, but only if the cases are ones not previously discussed in the 20 patient/client sessions. This is the only type of mentoring that is well done in online group settings. BCIA also offers mentoring webinars, each providing one contact hour to review two case studies.

C. Essential Skills List

A candidate should be able to demonstrate mastery of these basic skills as attested by their BCIA-approved Mentor, who will work with the candidate to assess each item and initial as completed.

**IV. Obligations and Responsibilities of the Mentor**

- A. Experienced professionals have an obligation to provide mentoring to those entering the field, thus ensuring that new providers are adequately trained. Mentors are not responsible for the patient, unless they are also licensed as supervisors who have taken legal responsibility for the client. The process of mentoring is simply teaching the hands-on application of biofeedback skills.
- B. Mentors should maintain objectivity and should have no conflict of interest, including dual relationships. *BCIA does not endorse providing mentoring to a*

*family member.* Although the mentor is in a position of power, the candidate must be treated with respect. This position must not be used to exploit the candidate in any way, including sexual harassment.

- C. The mentor also has an obligation to the patients/clients of the candidate, and must take appropriate action against unethical conduct of the candidate and one's self. If the mentor believes that the candidate is unqualified to deliver biofeedback services, this must be clearly stated through an evaluation or some other appropriate method.

## **V. Professional Commitment**

BCIA expects mentors to be:

- active in the field of biofeedback and their profession as evidenced by affiliations with professional organizations and as required for BCIA recertification.
- free of active sanction by a disciplinary proceeding.
- Involved in formalized training and professional development in the practice of biofeedback. This may include workshops, continuing education programs, and study of current literature.
- experienced with the candidate's client population and methods of practice.
- knowledgeable about issues related to diversity such as race, language, culture, gender, sexual orientation, age, and disability.
- technically and professionally experienced with a major time and career commitment to the field of applied psychophysiology and biofeedback.

## **VI. Client Confidentiality**

BCIA encourages clinicians to maintain HIPAA compliant methods for all electronic communications. This would include communications with mentors, colleagues, other professionals, and insurance companies. Such compliance would include, but not be limited to, use of coded numbers in place of names, using initials, altered birth dates, blacking out identifying information, or other means of making patient identification impossible. BCIA encourages individuals to check with their employer, risk manager, or HIPAA regulations to make certain they are in compliance.

## **VII. Procedures**

- A. BCIA recommends that mentoring of biofeedback training with patients/clients should take place after the candidate is a pre-qualified BCIA applicant and completes didactic training through an accredited training program, unless the training is part of a degree granting program from an accredited college or university that offers course work concurrently with a practicum.
- B. Mentoring can begin when the candidate can demonstrate some basic competence with equipment and is only the time spent reviewing the actual work as outlined by BCIA. Primarily working on equipment issues or technical support is not mentoring and should not be included.

- C. **Filing a Mentor Application**  
The certificant should file a Mentor Application and await approval from BCIA prior to beginning hands-on training. Approved applications are valid for one year and during that time, the mentor may simply email BCIA with new candidate names or any significant changes to the information.
- D. **Mentoring Agreement**  
BCIA recommends, but does not require, a written mentoring agreement that should be signed by both the mentor and candidate prior to starting to work together. It should be amended and renegotiated as needed to reflect any necessary changes. The agreement should include, but not be limited to the following:
1. obligations of the mentor and the candidate.
  2. a set period of time (no more than one year) or renegotiated at the end of the time.
  3. a statement to abide by the ethical principles of the mentor's profession and the BCIA Professional Standards and Ethical Principles of Biofeedback. (PSEP).
  4. a plan to address conflicts between mentor and candidate.
  5. a fee charged for mentoring.
  6. a process for termination of the mentoring relationship.
  7. an evaluation or performance appraisal to be done at specified intervals.
- E. **Documentation**
1. **Recording Contact Hours and Sessions**  
Mentoring progress should be recorded by both the mentor and candidate. BCIA provides an optional log sheet that can serve as a recording document during the mentoring process.
  2. **Mentor's Signature Upon Completion**  
The application contains a section that can be signed upon completion of the work with the candidate. There is a separate statement one can submit to document exactly what was done with the candidate. Some candidates work with more than one mentor, so it is imperative that the mentor edit the statement and sign off on only what was accomplished.
  3. **Essential Skills List**  
This checklist must be reviewed with the candidate and the mentor must initial as each skill is tested and approved. Should the entire list not be completed, the mentor is to sign off only on what was approved and submit the list directly to BCIA, not to the candidate.

## **VIII. Liability Issues**

Although it is rare for a mentor to be held liable for the mistakes made by the candidate, we advise prudence when the treatment of patients is involved. We strongly advise that the mentor verify the professional liability insurance of the

candidate when the treatment of patients is involved. It is ill advised to treat patients without obtaining professional liability insurance. In order to avoid liability problems, we strongly advise that the following risk management procedures be instituted by the mentor.

- A. Monitor the candidate's professional functioning as well as the mentoring process on a regular basis. Document all interactions.
- B. Ensure that biofeedback services are performed according to accepted standards.
- C. To protect patient confidentiality, a mentor should insist on an informed consent form regarding disclosure of information if the identity of the client/patient is evident.
- D. Identify any practice that might pose a danger to patients/clients and quickly take remedial action.
- E. Identify any inability to practice due to impairment by alcohol, drugs, illness, stress, or personal problems.

#### **IX. Continuing Education Credit**

In order to receive accredited hours for BCIA recertification, an approved Mentor Application should be on file with BCIA. A mentor may earn 5 Accredited CE hours for each pre-approved candidate who is mentored for a minimum of 15 hours.